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UNICEF report on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit

Summary

In accordance with Executive Board decision 2001/4, the present report summarizes the response of UNICEF to the recommendations contained in recent reports and notes of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) that are directly relevant to UNICEF. The seven reports and two notes included in this report were issued by the JIU from September 2012 through December 2013.

* E/ICEF/2014/5.

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I. Introduction

1. The Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) annually issues reports and notes addressed to the executive heads of United Nations organizations that have accepted the Unit's statute. Each report or note contains a series of recommendations for consideration by either the executive heads or the legislative/governing bodies of the organizations (see list of reports and recommendations in annex 1). The UNICEF report to its Executive Board provides, inter alia (a) a brief overview of the UNICEF response to relevant reports issued by the JIU from September 2012 through December 2013; and (b) comments on JIU recommendations that have been directed for consideration by the Executive Board (see annex 2). The complete reports and notes of the JIU may be obtained through the JIU website (www.unjiu.org) or through the hyperlinked titles of each report in section II of the present document.

2. Since submission of the previous report (E/ICEF/2013/6) to the Executive Board at its first regular session of 2013, UNICEF has continued to work with the JIU on various reviews conducted under its auspices and to follow up on the recommendations contained in the reports. This interaction on issues of common interest has increased the relevance of JIU reports, improved the implementation of their recommendations and enhanced transparency. Furthermore, member organizations of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination have continued to provide consolidated responses to various JIU reports.

II. Overview of Joint Inspection Unit reports and recommendations

3. The seven JIU reports and two JIU notes of direct relevance to UNICEF are summarized below. Additional comments are provided on each report and the relevant recommendations.

A. Staff recruitment in United Nations system organizations: a comparative analysis and benchmarking framework (JIU/REP/2012/4)

4. The objective of the report is to assess issues of efficiency, transparency and fairness in the recruitment process, bearing in mind principles such as geographical representation, gender balance and equality of official working languages within the context of the United Nations system organizations. The review addresses recruitment rules, policies and procedures across organizations, focusing on external recruitment leading to appointments of one year or more. It delivers a comparative analysis that identifies commonalities and differences, as well as good practices.

UNICEF comments

5. UNICEF takes note of the report on staff recruitment and has already made significant progress on many of its recommendations, as well as many of the benchmarks highlighted in the report. For example, in 2013, in accordance with the key performance indicator of UNICEF, recruitment time from the closing of a

vacancy announcement to issuance of an offer letter was within the established 90 days. UNICEF also notes that this report should be read in conjunction with the three JIU supplemental notes on staff recruitment (JIU/NOTE/2012/1, JIU/NOTE/2012/2, and JIU/NOTE/2012/3).

B. Review of Individual Consultancies in the United Nations System (JIU/REP/2012/5)

6. The objective of the report is to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the use of individual consultancies in the United Nations system. This consolidated system-wide comparative analysis of policies and practices across the system highlights the similarities and differences among organizations, identifies good practices and makes recommendations for improvement.

UNICEF comments

7. UNICEF takes note of the report and has already completed eight of the recommendations and made significant progress on the remaining five. UNICEF is revising its policy containing provisions on the principles of contracting, identification and selection process, roles and responsibilities, performance and evaluation, and remuneration schemes. The policy also includes provisions on the use of retirees and applicable travel rules. Monitoring and oversight has also been strengthened through the implementation of an integrated data collection system improving efficiency, monitoring and reporting mechanisms for consultants. UNICEF notes the importance and need for a system-wide approach to individual consultancies.

C. Review of Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems in United Nations organizations (JIU/REP/2012/8)

8. The objective of the report is to review the implementation, use, maintenance, evolution, upgrade and extension of existing ERP systems in the United Nations organizations, and establish success methods for enhancing sustainability and flexibility of evolving user requirements and technology. The report aims to help organizations improve their ERP systems; identify system-wide opportunities to share, harmonize and standardize ERP operations between organizations. In doing so, the report assesses the efficiency, effectiveness, value added, impact, user satisfaction, coherence and sustainability of ERP systems.

UNICEF comments

9. UNICEF is committed to further improving inter-agency efficiency and effectiveness in the operations and management of ERP systems, while at the same time noting the differing business models of each agency. For example, UNICEF is supportive of coherence efforts around business intelligence and reporting as a relevant method for achieving outcomes in interoperability. UNICEF feels there should be further convergence of United Nations business processes and ERP systems, and is eagerly awaiting the findings of the ERP analysis commissioned by the Chief Executives Board (CEB) for Coordination, which will start in 2014.

D. Lump-sum payments in lieu of entitlements (JIU/REP/2012/9)

10. The report considers the current and future applications of the lump-sum option for selected entitlements. It aims to determine whether its use saves on overheads and provides greater flexibility for staff, while not having significant financial implications. It considers whether there is a need to harmonize existing lump-sum procedures and establish acceptable and consistent calculation criteria and procedural rules to ensure fairness for staff working in different United Nations system organizations.

UNICEF comments

11. UNICEF notes that the current comprehensive review by the International Civil Service Commission on the compensation package for internationally recruited staff members, which is due in 2015, will address the recommendations contained in this report.

E. Financing for humanitarian operations in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2012/11)

12. The objective of the report is to identify the spectrum of funding mechanisms and sources of humanitarian operations within the United Nations system, and compare or identify linkages in order to close gaps and avoid duplication. It aims to provide organizations with a coherent and strategic planning framework for the financing of humanitarian operations in order to enhance the system's capacity to deliver relevant and adequate assistance to the populations of disaster-affected countries in a reliable manner.

UNICEF comments

13. UNICEF welcomes the 2012 JIU review on financing for humanitarian operations in the United Nations system. The strong partnerships of UNICEF with Member States, donors and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) at global, regional and country levels will bring the necessary synergy to implement the report's recommendations. Given the increasing severity and chronic nature of emergencies, UNICEF and its partners have been working to make the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) a strategic financial planning framework in order to strengthen the capacity of the United Nation system to deliver humanitarian assistance and carry out early recovery activities for the benefit of affected populations. Further coordination and harmonization among the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Development Group, where feasible, will help to increase cost-effective, accountable and systematic management of resources.

F. Strategic planning in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2012/12)

14. The objective of the report is to provide United Nations organizations with a tool to assist them in elaborating and formulating strategic plans. The report proposes good practices and system-wide guidelines. The effective use of these

guidelines for establishing processes and planning mechanisms, as well as for monitoring, evaluating, auditing and further budgeting strategic plans, would make strategic planning an instrument for promoting system-wide coordination and coherence in major programmatic sectors. The review identified different approaches and tools employed with regard to system-wide scope, duration of cycle, results-based management, the relationship between policy planning and resource mobilization, corporate capacity building, reporting, monitoring and evaluations.

UNICEF comments

15. UNICEF welcomes the rich analysis presented in the report and notes that it is an active participant in the United Nations system coordination, including through ongoing efforts of the CEB, the High-level Committee on Programmes and the High-level Committee on Management. UNICEF will continue to participate in processes that the Secretary-General may consider necessary for defining a coherent overarching framework and common goals for strategic planning to ensure consistency and avoid overlap of activities across the United Nations system.

16. UNICEF, together with other United Nations funds and programmes, have harmonized terminology and instruments to enhance effectiveness and facilitate enhanced country-level strategic planning and the reporting of results. The Executive Board, through its decision 2014/1 adopted at the first regular session of 2014, approved modifications to procedures for consideration and approval of country programme documentation. For the two recommendations addressed to the Executive Board, the one related to harmonizing planning cycles has already been achieved with the approval of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014-2017. UNICEF takes note of the recommendation on system-wide strategic sectoral frameworks, and will consider this recommendation within the context of the recently approved Strategic Plan, as well as the ongoing discussions on the post-2015 development agenda.

G. Flexible working arrangements in the United Nations system organizations (JIU/NOTE/2012/4)

17. The objective of the note is to examine the various flexible working arrangements throughout the United Nations system, the policies that are in place and the practical implications of the differing arrangements for staff, management and the organization.

UNICEF comments

18. UNICEF welcomes the recommendation contained in the note, and has incorporated content on the use of flexible working arrangements in several of its training programmes, particularly those intended for managers accountable for approving and supervising such arrangements. Staff and managers are encouraged to use flexible working arrangements, provided they can be reconciled with the interests of UNICEF, as one way to support staff well-being.

H. Reference checks in the United Nations system organizations (JIU/NOTE/2013/1)

19. The objective of the note is to assess issues of efficiency and effectiveness in the reference checking process, taking into consideration the diverse needs of United Nations system organizations. The report reviews relevant rules, policies and procedures across the system, and delivers a comparative analysis that identifies commonalities and differences, as well as good practices.

UNICEF comments

20. UNICEF supports and welcomes the two recommendations contained in this note. UNICEF fully supports the objective of harmonizing reference and background-checking practices across the United Nations system organizations and the utilization of the six benchmarks as guiding criteria for checking references and backgrounds.

I. Review of Long-Term Agreements in Procurement in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2013/1)

21. The objective of the report is to evaluate the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the use of Long-Term Agreements (LTAs) in the United Nations system. The review covers a variety of issues regarding LTAs, including the assessment of existing policies, practices and statistical data, types of LTAs, their advantages and disadvantages, available guidelines and strategies applied, the level of collaboration through LTAs among United Nations organizations, and good practices and lessons learned.

UNICEF comments

22. Since the implementation of its global ERP system in January 2012, UNICEF has performed all procurement through this new system, which includes the establishment and management of purchase orders (POs)/contracts and LTAs. Information on contracts and LTAs can be consulted by all UNICEF procurement staff, and the ERP makes it possible to extract statistics on procurement and relate these to POs/contracts and LTA usage. This offers UNICEF the opportunity to effectively carry out oversight and coordination functions in the monitoring of its offices' procurement activities and the linkages of contracts/POs to LTAs in compliance with its policies and procedures. The procurement guidelines of the organization are regularly updated following the recommendations and initiatives of the Procurement Network within the High-level Committee on Management related to enabling and facilitating collaborative procurement. Where there are commonalities, UNICEF actively supports collaboration with other United Nations agencies in procurement. This is implemented on a case-by-case basis, depending on the nature, context and price structure of specific LTAs.

Ongoing/forthcoming Joint Inspection Unit reports and notes

23. UNICEF is participating in ongoing JIU reviews scheduled for completion in 2014 and looks forward to presenting its comments on them to the Executive Board at its annual session of 2015. Below is the preliminary list of such reports:

(a) Records and archives management policies within the United Nations (expected completion: 2014);

(b) Review of system-wide joint programming and administrative arrangements of operational activities within the United Nations system (expected completion: 2014);

(c) An analysis of the resource mobilization function within the United Nations System (expected completion: 2014);

(d) Use of non-staff and related contractual modalities in the field offices of the United Nations System organizations (expected completion: 2014);

(e) Selection and appointment process of the United Nations Resident Coordinators, including preparations, training and support provided to their work (expected completion: 2014);

(f) The management of implementing partners in the United Nations system (expected completion: 2014);

(g) Good practices in the management of capital/construction/refurbishment projects across the United Nations system (expected completion: 2014);

(h) An analysis of the evaluation function in the United Nations system (expected completion: 2014);

(i) The use of retirees and staff beyond retirement age in the United Nations system organizations (expected completion: 2014);

(j) Post-Rio+20 review of environmental governance within the United Nations system (expected completion: 2014);

(k) Feasibility study or a review of the United Nations Special Political Missions (expected completion: 2014);

(l) Feasibility study on a review of Safety and Security (expected completion: 2014).

Annex 1

List of Joint Inspection Unit reports and recommendations

JIU report symbol	*Report title*	*Total number of recommendations contained in the report*	*Total number of recommendations of relevance to UNICEF*	*Total number of recommendations of relevance to the UNICEF Executive Board**
JIU/REP/2012/4	Staff recruitment in United Nations system organizations: a comparative analysis and benchmarking framework	4	3	1
JIU/REP/2012/5	Review of individual consultancies in the United Nations system	13	12	1
JIU/REP/2012/8	Review of Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems in United Nations organizations	4	3	1
JIU/REP/2012/9	Lump-sum payments in lieu of entitlements	5	4	2
JIU/REP/2012/11	Financing for humanitarian operations in the United Nations system	8	5	1
JIU/REP/2012/12	Strategic planning in the United Nations system	5	4	2
JIU/NOTE/2012/4	Flexible working arrangements in the United Nations system organizations	5	1	0
JIU/NOTE/2013/1	Reference checks in the United Nations system organizations	2	1	0
JIU/REP/2013/1	Review of Long-Term Agreements in procurement in the United Nations system	5	5	1

* For details of these recommendations, see annex 2.

Annex 2

Summary of the remarks of UNICEF on JIU recommendations addressed to the Executive Board

Relevant recommendations	*Remarks*
Staff recruitment in United Nations system organizations: a comparative analysis and benchmarking framework (JIU/REP/2012/4)	
Recommendation 1 The legislative bodies of United Nations system organizations should direct executive heads to be guided by the 15 recruitment benchmarks proposed in this review when hiring external candidates to fixed-term positions of one year or more (JIU/REP/2012/4, para. 27).	UNICEF supports and welcomes this recommendation. UNICEF supports the objective of harmonizing recruitment business practices across the United Nations system organizations and the utilization of the 15 benchmarks as the standard criteria for recruitment and for measuring progress.
Review of individual consultancies in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2012/5)	
Recommendation 12 The legislative/governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations should exercise their oversight function on the use of consultants through regular reviews of analytical information provided by the executive heads of the respective organizations.	UNICEF supports this recommendation.
Review of Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems in United Nations organizations (JIU/REP/2012/8)	
Recommendation 2 The legislative/governing bodies of United Nations system organizations should exercise their monitoring and oversight role on their respective ERP projects on an ongoing basis, including implementation, maintenance and upgrade policy, cost-efficiency and achievements of the overall objectives of the projects.	UNICEF ERP business owners and technical groups are committed to the process of ERP harmonization, and continue to participate in the established United Nations governance groups. Although the operational interoperability remains challenging due to complexities of businesses process, technology platforms and policy, convergence are is expected. UNICEF is eagerly awaiting the findings of the CEB-commissioned ERP analyses starting in 2014.

Relevant recommendations	*Remarks*
Lump-sum payments in lieu of entitlements (JIU/REP/2012/9)	
Recommendation 1 The legislative/governing bodies of United Nations system organizations should request their respective executive heads to prepare a report on the usage of the lump-sum option for home leave travel which, inter alia, would compare the costs for providing the lump-sum option with those of organizing the travel for the eligible headquarter-based staff members for a period of two years. Upon consideration of the report, the legislative/governing body should decide in 2015 whether to take any action deemed appropriate.	UNICEF believes that the current comprehensive review by the International Civil Service Commission of the compensation package for internationally recruited staff members, which is due in 2015, will address this recommendation.
Recommendation 3 The legislative/governing bodies of United Nations system organizations should request their respective executive heads to suspend, if not already the case, the payment of additional DSA (15 or 40 per cent), to those officials travelling on organizational budgets.	UNICEF current policy already discontinued the additional daily subsistence allowance (DSA) previously paid out to staff members at the D-1 levels and above.
Financing for humanitarian operations in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2012/11)	
Recommendation 3 The General Assembly should mandate the Secretary-General to present, with the support of the IASC, a proposal on a set of good humanitarian funding principles advocating soft earmarking and a participatory approach, taking into account the good practices in the inclusive programme-based management and governance arrangements of CHFs at the country level and the experience made through the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative.	UNICEF supports this recommendation and welcomes the proposal for the Secretary-General to advocate on good humanitarian funding principles. In emergencies, such principles are crucial to deliver a timely and effective response. UNICEF further affirms the need to build on lessons and experiences of existing pooled funding mechanisms and global financing principles.
Strategic planning in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2012/12)	
Recommendation 4 The legislative bodies of the United Nations system organizations should formulate and define relevant system-wide sectoral strategic frameworks through the Economic and Social Council to address the long-term goals established by the 2005 World Summit	UNICEF notes the recommendation that the Economic and Social Council should develop system-wide sectoral strategic frameworks, and would support efforts to address long-term goals coherently. With the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014-2017, recently

Relevant recommendations	*Remarks*
Outcome, adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 60/1, as well as those established by the missions and mandates of the system organizations as a result of global conferences.	approved by the Executive Board, the ongoing consultations for defining the post-2015 global agenda in the General Assembly will address long-term goals and future strategic plans of UNICEF.
Recommendation 5 The legislative bodies of the United Nations system organizations should instruct their respective secretariats to adopt the necessary measures by the end of 2015 to harmonize and/or align the planning cycles of their strategic plans so that all the organizations are ready to start a new harmonized reporting cycle to Member States in 2016.	UNICEF agrees with this recommendation and worked with UNDP, UNFPA and WFP to harmonize and align strategic planning cycles, which covers the period 2014-2017. This time frame was agreed so that the strategic plans could take into consideration the recommendations made in the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 67/226 of 21 December 2012.

Flexible working arrangements in the United Nations system organizations (JIU/NOTE/2012/4)

The recommendations in this report do not require action by the UNICEF Executive Board.

Reference checks in the United Nations system organizations (JIU/NOTE/2013/1)

The recommendations in this report do not require action by the UNICEF Executive Board.

Review of Long-Term Agreements in procurement in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2013/1)

Recommendation 5 The legislative/governing bodies should exercise their oversight role on the procurement function and procurement activities with a view to ensuring that the procurement function adequately fulfils its strategic role and that procurement activities, including LTAs, are carried out based on sound procurement plans and strategies.	The oversight role of procurement activities is routinely built into the UNICEF regulatory framework, which includes procurement strategies, Contracts Review Committee processes, authorization levels on procurement, and independent oversight of segregation of duties. At minimum, 70 per cent of UNICEF procurement is done through LTAs.